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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2466, SIT REP 2 - NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2466**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA2466	2006-11-07 23:45	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR KDEM NU
SUBJECT: SIT REP 2 - NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

REF: MANAGUA 02459

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (U) Summary: With the results of 60 percent of the voting tables (JRVs) in, Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) presidential candidate Daniel Ortega enjoys an eight-point lead over his closest competitor, Eduardo Montealegre of the Liberal Nicaraguan Alliance (ALN), and will likely win the election. Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) Jose Rizo continues in third place, Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) Edmundo Jarquin trails in forth place, and Alternative for Change (AC) candidate Eden Pastora receives than 1 percent of the vote. The CSE expects to release its next results later today. International and national observer groups released several statements expressing concern over CSE politicization, with no groups indicating the presence of electoral fraud. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On the evening of November 6, the CSE released its fourth report on preliminary election results covering 61.8 percent of the JRVs. Results for the president/vice president follow:

FSLN - 38.54% (down from the previous report's 40.01%)
ALN - 30.94% (down from 32.72%)
PLC - 22.93% (up from 20.33%)
AC - 0.29% (down from 0.29%)
MRS - 7.25% (down from 7.50%)

(Comment: The slight decline in numbers for the FSLN and the ALN and a modest bump up in the PLC's numbers are likely due to the inclusion of rural JRVs. End Comment.)

¶3. (SBU) Preliminary results for National Assembly deputies selected at the national level:

FSLN: 38.07
ALN: 28.39
PLC: 23.18
MRS: 9.78
AC: 0.59

CSE Results in Line with ALN Tallies Thus Far

¶4. (C) Zenalia Madrigal, the ALN's party poll watcher coordinator, conceded to polcouns on the evening of November 6 that the CSE's latest preliminary results coincide closely with the ALN's scrutiny of 60% of the JRV results thus far. Madrigal said that reducing Ortega's eight-point lead over Montealegre to less than 5% is virtually impossible. She added that according to the ALN's party poll watcher (fiscal) at the central vote tally center -- who had seen rough

estimates of the results with 75% of the JRVs counted -- the eight-percent gap between Ortega and Montealegre remains at 8%, while the gap between Montealegre and Rizo has widened to about 12% and the MRS had climbed to 8%.

¶5. (C) In Montealegre's meeting with the Ambassador and DCM the evening of November 6, he conceded that the results stack in Ortega's favor. Opining that the PLC's smear campaign against him had cost him victory, Montealegre noted that the PLC's distribution of a fake letter attributing his resignation had misled a number of supporters in rural areas.

On the positive side, Montealegre said that as runner up, the ALN has consolidated its position in the country as the second political force and will exercise considerable influence in the National Assembly. He shared his plans to talk to the FSLN to convince its leaders to recognize the ALN as the second party in the country, adding that through its sizeable presence in the Assembly, the ALN will be able to influence the judiciary, including the appointment of Supreme Court magistrates, the AG, and public prosecutors.

¶6. (C) In a follow-up call on November 7, Montealegre indicated that indeed the ALN's count of tally sheets indicated that he had little chance of closing the gap, and he planned to concede to Ortega soon after the next CSE's announcement. He also said that he had had conversations with the FSLN in which they expressed interest in him taking on the presidency of the National Assembly for the first year, thereby providing a degree of assurance and stability to the country.

¶7. (SBU) The National Democratic Institute (NDI) -- Etica y Transparencia's (ET) quick count partner -- explained to the Ambassador on November 6 that it had advised ET not/not to release the results of its quick count prematurely because the data was incomplete; however, ET did not heed the advice.

(Comment: According to electoral law, quick count results must first be delivered to the CSE in a sealed envelope and the CSE determines when to release them. Given that the early results of the quick count were very favorable to Ortega -- likely the FSLN-dominated CSE leadership pressed ET to release the results early on. End Comment)

PLC Continues to Claim it will Place Second

¶8. (SBU) Asserting that the CSE has yet to tally the bulk of the rural vote, which will favor the PLC, PLC candidate Jose Rizo told the press on November 7 that the PLC will place second and close enough to call a runoff between him and Ortega. (Comment: The ET quick count sampled rural as well as semi-rural and urban areas; its quick count factor places Rizo third, although the margin between Rizo and Montealegre is smaller than that reflected in the CSE's preliminary results thus far (ALN at 29.52% and PLC 24.15%). Although we have seen no indication that suggests the PLC will place second, some of our contacts have told us that the FSLN may "pact" with the PLC to alter the assignment of some of the National Assembly seats to favor the PLC to the detriment of the ALN.)

International Observer Statements

¶9. (U) The OAS mission, in its Monday 10 a.m. statement on the elections, observed that the election was "peaceful and orderly, had a massive turnout and took place in accordance with the law." The OAS noted also that average citizen participation at the JRVs was around 70%. Representation of fiscales present was also estimated to be:

PLC - 100%
FSLN - 98%
ALN - 100%
MRS - 60%
AC - 18%

¶10. (U) According to OAS observers, no vote result challenges

(impugnaciones) were presented at polling centers (JRVs) where the OAS was present. However, the OAS also noted that at approximately 2% of the JRV's voters were in line but were unable to vote because the polling centers closed down. (Note: According to Nicaraguan electoral law, polling centers must remain open until the last person in line by 6 PM is allowed to vote.)

¶11. (SBU) Comment: It is very difficult to extrapolate the total number of voters who were disenfranchised based upon the above referenced 2% JRV figure. Although ET verbally reported to the Embassy that they also saw a 2% "JRV disenfranchisement" rate, there are no reports on the actual number of voters in line when the polls closed. Further, the total 3.6 million voters on the padron electoral (voter rolls) can't be assumed to represent the total number of real voters. For example, a significant number of voters on the rolls are deceased or have migrated. We understand that approximately 2.8 million voted in this election. Because of this incongruence, the 2% "JRV disenfranchisement" rate can't be directly applied to the total number of registered voters to determine the actual number of disenfranchised voters. End comment.

¶12. (U) The EU electoral mission observed in its Monday 5:40 p.m. press conference that the memory of war is still powerful in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, EU mission head Claudio Fava stated that the elections were generally peaceful and thousands of observers covered the event. The EU also noted a number of technical problems including the irregular distribution of national/voter IDS (cedulas) and temporary voting documents (documentos supletorios), but stated that this did not constitute fraud. However, the EU was more forward-leaning in its characterization of the CSE as being politicized, noting that electoral law does not facilitate the participation of more than two parties in the electoral process. Fava also observed that the press should seek to be more reactive to the electoral process in general. In closing, Fava noted that although the EU is awaiting the rest of the electoral results to be reported, it appeared that Ortega had been elected president.

¶13. (U) President Carter met again with candidate Ortega on Monday evening, shaking hands for the press. At the conclusion of the private meeting, Ortega and his campaign leader/ wife Rosario Murillo stated to the press that the FSLN would await the final results of the CSE before recognizing his victory. Nevertheless, many young FSLN supporters were out in force caravanning through Managua and other cities and towns before and after the meeting celebrating the presumed FSLN victory. With 60% of the JRV data counted, many Tuesday newspapers also covered FSLN's Monday evening celebrations.

National Observer Statements

¶14. (U) Movimiento por Nicaragua (MpN) noted today that it plans to release a public statement sometime today or later tomorrow. In the statement, MpN will indicate that the will of the Nicaraguan people favored Ortega. MpN executive director Pilar Martinez told us that the role of civil society is "now more important than ever," adding that the MpN will press Ortega to sign its good governance accord (the MRS and ALN signed the MpN's accord before the elections.)

¶15. (U) The Institute for Development and Democracy (IPADE) issued a report early Tuesday, raising concern that 73,734 cedulas were not retrieved by voters in advance of the election. The study noted that, in 44 municipal offices of the CSE, only 63,380 cedulas were picked up. In the municipality of Telica, Department of Leon, IPADE reported that only 90 documentos supletorios out of 690 had been retrieved for use. IPADE expressed concern generally that the CSE should develop a plan to distribute cedulas/documentos supletorios in all parts of the country, although it did not specifically reference partisan efforts in the distribution of such documents.

Elections Donor Group (EDG) Meeting

¶16. (SBU) The German Embassy convened the Elections Donor Group (EDG) at 10:00 a.m. on November 7. Representatives of the EU and OAS EOMs were present to report as was Etica y Transparencia (ET). The two main topics of discussion were the outcome of the national and departmental deputy races and follow up on electoral reform.

¶17. (SBU) ET Director Roberto Courtney reported that ET will have preliminary quick count results for the deputy races some time on Thursday afternoon. He said that many seats will be decided by very small margins (as few as 1-2 JRVs can make the difference), and even one seat in the National Assembly can cause a huge power shift from one caucus to the next, especially given the emerging multiparty situation and the thresholds for passing majority (47) and supermajority (56) votes. Courtney asked the international observer teams to please continue to monitor the process of impugnaciones because the CSE only works under extreme pressure.

¶18. (SBU) Courtney stated that the late-closing JRVs are reporting higher incidences of impugnaciones, which should reach 70-100 at the national level (out of 11,700 total JRVs). Although the overall percentage is low and within international norms, Courtney predicted that the parties will focus on strategic impugnaciones, as they have in the past, to attempt to change the outcome of key deputy races. ET will have a list of all reported impugnaciones by late this afternoon.

¶19. (SBU) OAS EOM Technical Director Patricio Gajardo stated that the core team of OAS observers will stay to monitor the process of impugnaciones. The initial verbal OAS report will be ready in late November or early December for presentation to the OAS Permanent Council, with the final report released in late January. The OAS will present the report, with recommendations, to the CSE first, then the international community (i.e. donor embassies). (Comment: Gajardo, when asked about the OAS stance on the Ley Marco given the election results, replied that this matter is being handled by Dante Caputo and Gustavo Fernandez and needs to be addressed at that level through USOAS. End Comment)

¶20. (SBU) EU EOM elections expert Francisco Cobos echoed Courtney's concerns regarding the impugnaciones and noted that a 4-hour power outage at the National Stadium in Managua had delayed the processing of results for thousands of JRVs. He commented that Ortega had actually received his lowest percentage of votes in the four elections he has participated in and also the lowest percentage of any Nicaraguan president. Cobos expects the final EU report will be ready in about two months. German DCM Guenter Sautter said that the German Embassy will organize a technical meeting to review the EU and OAS reports and discuss recommendations for electoral reform, with possible follow up with the CSE and political parties.

COMMENT

¶21. (SBU) Although many civil-society organizations and election observation missions have reported that they intend to release further statements in the near future, the bottom line is not expected to change; FSLN leader Daniel Ortega is primed to be the next president of Nicaragua.

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